

Embedding Indigenous cultural competencies within a digital media and communication context in Australian higher education.

Abstract

In 2011, Universities Australia published a best practice framework to support the Australian higher education sector to build Indigenous cultural competency institutionally, support Indigenous students and staff and to develop the Indigenous cultural competencies of students through curriculum and learning outcomes. For many institutions this has resulted in the development of Indigenous graduate attributes aimed at building the Indigenous cultural competencies of all students, including non-Indigenous students, with specific Indigenous cultural competencies embedded as learning outcomes within discipline programs. To date there has been limited discussion of the embedding of Indigenous cultural competencies within practice-based Australian media and communication programs such as journalism, film and video production or digital media. This article presents a case study on the embedding of an Indigenous Graduate Attribute within a digital media program in 2018 and 2019, with an objective of building Indigenous cultural competencies in relation to students' digital media practice. This case study discusses the development of a set of integrated teaching and learning activities and an assessment foregrounding Indigenous content and principles and protocols designed to equip students with cultural competencies that can be applied to their future professional media practice. While the case study is specific, it has relevance to the ongoing discussion of embedding Indigenous competencies into media and communication programs more broadly.

Keywords: Indigenous cultural competencies, curriculum design, digital media, active learning, communication.

Introduction

As is the case in other colonised nations including Canada and New Zealand, Australian universities are emphasising the need for graduates to possess the ability to engage and work effectively with Indigenous peoples and content in order to promote social justice and tackle inequality (Page, Trudgett & Bodkin-Andrews, 2019). In 2011, a *National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities* was created through a project undertaken by Universities Australia (UA) and the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council. Indigenous cultural competency is understood in this context as meaning “Student and staff knowledge and understanding of Indigenous Australian cultures, histories and contemporary realities and awareness of Indigenous protocols, combined with the proficiency to engage and work effectively in Indigenous contexts congruent to the expectations of Indigenous Australian peoples” (Universities Australia, 2011, p. 6).

In response to the UA framework, which provides guiding principles for embedding Indigenous cultural competencies across multiple university practices including teaching and learning, Australian universities have sought to embed Indigenous knowledges, perspectives and cultural competencies into tertiary curricula in conjunction with Indigenous Graduate attributes relevant to each institution, faculty and educational program. According to Carey (2015) the UA report suggests that Indigenous curriculum content should have internal consistency and be coherently integrated into students' broader field of study in contexts relevant to their future

professions. Page, Trudgett & Bodkin-Andrews (2019) developed a university-wide, Indigenous Graduate Attributes framework which further emphasises the need for these competencies to be aligned to future practice while recognising the challenges implicit in implementing this approach.

A growing body of literature and research engages with Indigenous cultural competency as a teaching and learning paradigm, which has been somewhat dominated by perspectives from the health sciences and human services disciplines (Carey, 2015). Thus far there has been limited discussion of learning and teaching strategies concerning Indigenous cultural competencies within professional media practice areas in the media and communication discipline, except where they intersect more broadly with Indigenous studies (Page, Trudgett & Bodkin-Andrews, 2019). An exception is the experiential learning project run by Curtin, Griffith and Western Sydney University involving students engaging with Indigenous communities using reflective practice (Bennett et al., 2016). Apart from this, limited information exists concerning learning and teaching strategies used in production-focussed media and communication programs in the Australian higher education context.

The framework has simultaneously been introduced into an educational landscape that places an increasing emphasis on student-focussed, active learning approaches and strategies (Barnett, 2007, McWilliam, 2008) in which teachers operate more as learning facilitators rather than as experts (Stewart, 2012), and where students actively engage in problem-solving activities and tasks. Hunt (2013) emphasises the need for authentic learning tasks within active learning approaches, and likewise Barnett (2007) recognises that this may involve a potentially challenging learning experience for students.

This paper reports on the embedding of an Indigenous Graduate Attribute (IGA) within a Communication discipline specifically in the context of digital and social media, in which the objective is to build Indigenous cultural competencies in relation to students' digital media practice. The learning approach integrates a professionally oriented assessment task within an active learning strategy to facilitate student understanding of potentially unfamiliar concepts concerning Indigenous content, principles and protocols in the context of digital media. This active learning strategy has been designed to equip digital media students with Indigenous cultural competencies that can operate as a foundation for their future professional practice. The teaching and learning approach discussed here builds an understanding of Indigenous principles and protocols, foregrounds Indigenous expert voices, involves students in scenario-based learning and culminates in students applying their knowledge to professional digital media practices and outputs. The professional, discipline-based focus of the approach suggests potential relevance and application within media and communication disciplines more broadly, in programs relating to screen media production, journalism, digital media or advertising.

This case study aims to illustrate a practical approach to embedding Indigenous cultural competencies in a production-focused communications degree. It shares the successful process used by Australian academics in the field of digital and social media, who consulted with Indigenous colleagues to design an appropriate assessment task and

develop learning materials and activities to scaffold student learning. This paper outlines the specific context of graduate attributes in an Australian university, then demonstrates the process used to embed the IGA within the digital media context, using the assessment of student's development of Indigenous professional capability as evidence of the process's ability to effectively educate students in important Indigenous cultural competencies required for the contemporary workplace.

Embedding Indigenous Graduate Attributes

Establishing an Indigenous graduate attribute framework

In 2007, the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council recommended that Indigenous Cultural Competence should be a graduate attribute for all university students (Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council, 2007). Further reports argue that all graduates can contribute to improved outcomes for Indigenous Australians and that graduates require specific knowledges and skills to work effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Behrendt et al., 2012; Universities Australia, 2011). The 2011 UA report provided a set of recommendations and guiding principles for embedding Indigenous cultural competencies across a range of Australian university practices. Of the five recommendations in concerning teaching and learning, Recommendation 2 specifically asks to “Include Indigenous cultural competency as a formal Graduate Attribute or Quality” (Universities Australia, 2011, p. 9). Since 2013, our University has responded to this through the implementation of a IGA framework to support curriculum renewal in Indigenous competencies. The framework supports faculties to develop distinct, professionally relevant IGA and Course-Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) to be applied within their academic programs. To support implementation of the IGAs, a Centre was established in 2015 with three senior appointed to lead the project and help guide academic staff in applying the framework.

The Indigenous academics have written about the IGA program, arguing that by increasing the capacity and ability of graduates to work respectfully with Indigenous peoples and communities, graduates will be less resistant to the guiding principles and protocols and as a result, communities will be strengthened (p. 260). They have identified several inherent challenges in establishing a university wide IGA framework, notably that the project still requires many more academics to engage with Indigenous curriculum than currently do (p. 263). Additional challenges involve issues of curriculum ownership and “the risk that Indigenous Knowledges may become appropriated and repackaged over time by non-Indigenous academics” (2016, p. 264). The curriculum example described in the following pages is an outcome of the UTS IGA framework and developed with the guidance of the Centre staff.

Building Indigenous competencies in Communication

Our Faculty developed the following two IGA CILOs for inclusion in its undergraduate programs in Communication, to be applied across the six majors of Creative Writing,

Digital and Social Media, Journalism, Media Arts and production, Public Communication and Social and Political Sciences:

- Possess a critical understanding of the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within contemporary Australian politics, history and culture.
- Integrate knowledge of Indigenous issues in professional practices and engage responsibly in communicating with and about Indigenous people and communities.

During 2017, a faculty-wide assessment mapping study found that only a small number of Communication subjects, outside Indigenous Studies, were integrating and assessing the Indigenous CILOs. This translated into low representation of IGA related learning outcomes across many professional media practice areas such as journalism, media arts and digital and social media despite the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media content in lectures and tutorials.

Carey emphasises building cultural competencies coherently in ways that are relevant and applicable to professional practice, where Indigenous content in undergraduate degrees “should have both its own internal coherency and be coherently integrated into their broader field of study” (Carey, 2015, p. 829, citing UA, 2011, pp. 57-59). Carey (2015) refers to a pedagogical framework (Ranzijn, McConnochie & Nolan, 2009) which moves beyond a superficial, potentially tokenistic approach to Indigenous cultures towards the capacity for students to apply Indigenous competencies within workplace contexts that are relevant to their future profession. Page, Trudgett and Bodkin-Andrews have particularly emphasised the importance of building Indigenous competencies within an applied disciplinary context, citing the example of a publishing house withdrawing a music anthology on female Aboriginal musicians due to alleged inaccuracy and exploitation (2019, p. 9) and expressing dismay that a publisher would be unfamiliar with appropriate protocols.

Other high profile media industry examples include allegations of misappropriation of Indigenous cultural material in the Netflix series *After Life* whereby the Papunya dot painting style was replicated for a key artwork featured in the set design (Higgins, 2019) and the controversy surrounding the Seven network’s *Sunrise* segment on Aboriginal children and their omission of an Indigenous discussant to present a balanced perspective (ABC, 2018). These examples highlight the timeliness of educational strategies which embed Indigenous cultural competency for graduates planning to work in the media, communication and cultural industries.

One approach to build such competency is the experiential learning project involving Curtin, Griffith and Western Sydney University in which creative arts, media and journalism students and pre-service teachers have engaged with Aboriginal people, primarily in rural areas, travelling to these communities for several weeks and participating in intercultural activities (Bennett et al., 2016). This project foregrounds reflective practice and critical self-monitoring as students engage in experiential learning activities. While demonstrating positive learning experiences and outcomes,

this approach could be challenging to implement and sustain more widely with larger student numbers given the extensive degree of liaison required involving multiple Indigenous community organisations, artists and youths – in this example, 140 Indigenous artists and 150 Indigenous youths for 70 arts students and 37 pre-service teachers (Bennett et al., p. 4).

Given the identified gap in Indigenous competencies within Communication production majors at our University and seeking to implement curriculum renewal, in late 2017 we began exploring how to build Indigenous competencies within Communication at our University in a professionally relevant context.

Applying the Indigenous Graduate Attributes in a Digital Media Context

The major engages with key debates around the role of digital and social media in everyday life as well as building analytical and practical skills in digital and social media production (Handbook, 2018). Having recognised the need to build Indigenous competency into the major and seeking a way to incorporate this expeditiously within the framework of an existing subject, we discussed where an appropriate place might be. The third-year subject, focussing on conceptual, design, interface and user experience approaches to mobile app development provided an interesting opportunity to engage with issues of Indigenous representation, culture, copyright and responsible professional practice. Our initial research had identified the existence of multiple mobile apps developed by and for Indigenous Australians. We saw the potential to modify and reframe the existing mobile app case study assessment item into a case study of an Indigenous mobile app, with the aim of building students' Indigenous cultural competency.

Several factors worked in favour of embedding the IGA into a subject focusing on app design. Firstly, undergraduates have a demonstrable interest and degree of engagement with mobile phones. In its 2017 Mobile Consumer survey, Deloitte's states that 88% of Australians own a smartphone, increasing to 95% in the 18-34-year age group, a percentage they name as 'peak smartphone' penetration. According to Deloitte's "Almost 70 percent of 18-24-year olds admit they use their phones excessively, almost 50 percent are trying to limit their phone usage but only one in five are succeeding..." (Deloitte, 2017). Additionally, 65 percent of 18-24-year olds multitask on their mobiles whilst in the company of others (Deloitte, 2017). Given our collective experience in university classrooms, it comes as little surprise that students are highly engaged with and motivated to spend time on their phones. Could student interest and engagement with smartphones and mobile content be leveraged into engagement with Indigenous mobile content?

Secondly, the subject itself is concerned with building professional skills and knowledge concerning the new modes of publishing and distribution made possible by apps and mobile devices. These include exploring the conceptual, design and production skills and processes involved in smartphone app design and development, audience consideration, user experience and interface design, and the challenges and opportunities for content producers and developers working in this space. Embedding

Indigenous competencies within a framework of professional digital media practice could be an innovative – and professionally relevant – pedagogical approach.

Thirdly, digital platforms and technologies intersect with and draw attention to issues of culture and representation within digital media and society more broadly. Goggin (2011) argues that the mobile app environment is effectively a new cultural platform that has created new openness and opportunities, nevertheless they should also be examined in terms of possible barriers to entry for both producers and consumers and for the degree of inclusiveness and diversity evident within the available content (Goggin, 2011, p. 150). In addition to the consideration of apps as a cultural platform, questions relating to Indigenous copyright and the potential for misappropriation of cultural material through the misuse of digital reproduction technology is a further concern that we considered critical for digital media graduates to understand in terms of their future professional practice.

Developing a process for embedding Indigenous Competencies

Following this initial resolve, we commenced researching the mobile app market to better understand the range of available Australian Indigenous mobile apps and determine the practicality of the assessment. Through online searches we identified approximately thirty potential case study examples operating across diverse app genres including art, culture, language and health.

These examples illustrated a wide diversity of content and design, with some apps developed by large companies and organisations, such as the *Barangaroo Ngangamay Multimedia Experience* app (Barangaroo Delivery Authority, 2017) created with support from the NSW State Government, and others created by smaller organisations or solo developers such as *Welcome to Country* (Weerianna Street Media, 2015). The selection included apps designed to provide health services to Indigenous Australians such as *NACCHO: Aboriginal health in Aboriginal hands* (GiveEasy, 2013) and *Deadly Tots* (Resourcing Parents); and support to health care professionals working in Indigenous communities such as *CommDoc* (Northern Territory General Practice Education, 2015). We also identified a range of language apps designed to preserve and promote local Indigenous languages such as *Miriwoong* (Mirima Council Aboriginal Corporation, 2015), and *Ma Gamilaraay* (Ma Projects). We believed it was important to showcase a range of apps to demonstrate the diversity of the app landscape relating to Indigenous Australian content.

Selecting appropriate apps involved researching, downloading and testing each app before adding them to the list of potential case studies. While most apps were available on the iOS Store, only a few were also available on the Android Google Play Store. This highlighted issues around possible production constraints on smaller app developers. The process also revealed issues concerning app version control due to the need for regular revisions to ensure functioning with latest mobile operating systems. It is worth noting that this technical issue may present a barrier to smaller developers in ensuring ongoing access to Indigenous content in app platforms.

Having identified a selection of potential case study examples, we commenced a process for integrating the Indigenous Graduate Attribute formally into the subject. This involved the following key steps, summarised in Figure 1:– consult with Indigenous colleagues; design the assessment; develop a set of scaffolded learning materials and activities comprising Indigenous principles and protocols content, in-class scenario activities, a cultural activity (in 2018) and set of videos (2019); implement / launch the assessment and activities; and undertake a process of review and refinement prior to the next student intake. This process and key steps will now be expanded in further detail.

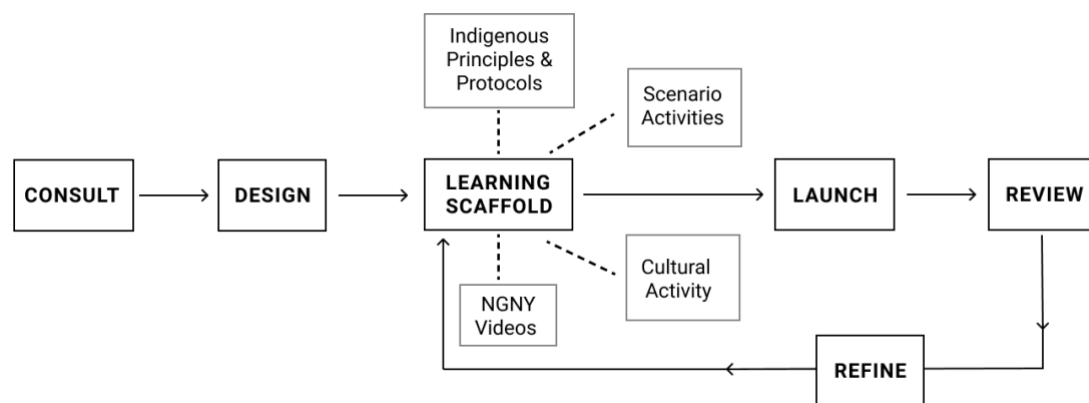


Figure 1. Process for embedding the Indigenous Graduate Attribute in a digital media context.

Consulting with Indigenous colleagues

Following the initial identification of possible apps, we began to liaise more formally with Indigenous staff for guidance in revising the assessment item and developing subject materials to scaffold the learning. We would like to acknowledge the invaluable guidance and support received from the Professor of the Centre. We would also like to acknowledge the support of other University centres and professionals, who facilitated engagement with the University’s Indigenous Art Collection to provide additional cultural context for students, which will be outlined shortly.

The first step was to redesign the assessment in order to encourage students to engage with issues of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and representation within the apps themselves, in addition to reflecting on mainstream design issues such as approaches to user experience, interface design and the perceived audience for the app. We were particularly keen for students to consider the range of Indigenous content included, evidence of consultation, acknowledgment of Indigenous imagery, or whether any of the projects may have been inadvertently employing negative stereotypes or problematic cultural representations or depictions.

We were directed by our colleagues to the University’s Design Index Indigenous Principles and Protocols guidelines (2018), a resource developed by an Indigenous academic Danièle Hromek outlining a core set of guidelines for designers working with Indigenous clients, organisations and communities, as well as for academics including Indigenous content into subjects. The Indigenous Principles and Protocols (IPP)

guidelines draw extensively upon Terri Janke's work including guidelines developed for the Australia Council for the Arts (*Protocols for Working with Indigenous Artists and Indigenous Cultural Protocols and the Arts*, 2016) and AIATSIS *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies* (2012). Janke's Indigenous guidelines have influenced the Australian arts and cultural sector through their impact on funding, intellectual copyright and cultural permission aspects of Australia Council, Screen Australia and state-based funding programs, and are therefore especially relevant in media production, arts and communication contexts.

Developed in consultation with the Centre, the IPP guidelines articulate a set of core guiding principles for staff working with Indigenous people, communities and cultural content:

- Respect;
- Indigenous agency;
- Communication, consultation, negotiation and consent;
- Interpretation, integrity and authenticity;
- Secrecy and confidentiality;
- Attribution and copyright;
- Benefit sharing and reciprocity;
- Continuing cultures;
- Recognition and protection.

We saw that these comprehensive guidelines could provide a roadmap or potential framework for students to approach the case study assessment through firstly gaining an understanding of Indigenous cultural principles and protocols and then reflecting on the ways in which these were evident and expressed within the specific apps. As such they could operate as an important foundation for students engaging with Indigenous mobile apps and in building a range of cultural competencies relevant to the digital environment.

Designing an active learning learning scaffold

For the initial delivery to a cohort of 128 students in 2018, we trialled an approach involving multiple scaffolded activities within a broad framework of active learning. This comprised gaining familiarity with Indigenous principles and protocols, engaging in a guided cultural activity, and undertaking in-class activities designed to explore real-world scenarios arising in professional practice which activate or represent areas of potential friction with Indigenous principles and protocols, such as situations involving potential misappropriation of cultural imagery, or lack of community consultation. These scenarios, and the detail of the learning scaffold, are detailed below.

In her article on quality teaching in the social sciences, Hunt (2013) describes pedagogical approaches to sociology informed by active learning theories, with students actively constructing knowledge through discovery, exploration, problem and enquiry-based methods, where the teacher guides and supports the student learning experience through "providing 'scaffolding' to learning — that is, to ensure the student has the

requisite knowledge, skills and support to negotiate a new piece of learning —and prompting the student through questioning or modelling” (Hunt, 2013, p.44). It was important when developing the assessment that the students be provided with opportunities to learn through collaborative, enquiry-based activities, designed to scaffold the learning of the material over several weeks to allow students time to explore the materials and apply their understanding to their case studies.

One of the challenges we faced concerned subject delivery constraints, whereby seminars are delivered in weekly lab-based classes of twenty-eight students each, without a central lecture program threading through the subject. The lab-based seminar approach works very well for the digital production development and active learning aspects of the subject, however the absence of a central lecture program posed challenges in terms of precluding the opportunity for a guest lecture from an Indigenous developer to discuss their work. This issue has been addressed in the second run of the assessment in 2019 through the inclusion of a set of original video interviews with Indigenous app developers John Saulo and Liam Ridgeway from Ngakkan Nyaagu digital agency, which will be discussed later.

Another challenge we anticipated was student reception to the task and content. There has been previous research around teaching staff feeling awkward, unsure or uncomfortable when teaching Indigenous content (Wolfe et al. 2017), but little research has been conducted on how students receive this content. We were conscious of this concern and added specific quantitative questions in the Student Feedback Survey, as well as the open-ended qualitative questions on subject satisfaction.

As scaffolding for the Indigenous app case study, various learning materials and in-class activities were designed. Slides were developed to draw attention and provide context to Indigenous principles and protocols, with particular reference to their intersection with digital media industries and practices. For example, the principle of Respect ‘relates to the rights of Indigenous peoples to own and control their heritage, both tangible and intangible, including art, designs, imagery, stories, dances, techniques, knowledges, etc. The principle respects that Indigenous peoples are the original inhabitants of the continent, and Indigenous cultures are living cultures’ (IPP, 2018, p.12). This principle was reinforced by screening a short animation describing the critical relationship of Indigenous people to Country, the intertwined relationships between stories, imagery and Country and the potential of misappropriation of cultural content through the unauthorised use of Indigenous imagery (Koori Design, 2018).

Similarly, the principles of Agency; Communication, Consultation, Negotiation and Consent; Interpretation, Integrity and Authenticity; Attribution and Copyright and Benefit Sharing and Reciprocity were discussed to provide understanding of the concepts, and unpacked further through reference to recent media examples, such as concerns over the sale of fake Indigenous souvenirs during the Commonwealth Games (Michelmores, 2017), the After Life dot painting replica (Higgins, 2019) and the contentious Sunrise segment’s lack of appropriate Indigenous consultation and representation (ABC, 2019).

A cultural activity for students involving guided in-class tours of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks within the Art collection was suggested by the

University art curator. Undertaken in collaboration with other university centres and provided by the art curator herself, students were guided through a set of artworks by Indigenous Australians, while also drawing attention to the cultural and political implications of the works. For a number of students within the cohort this was their first exposure to contemporary Australian Indigenous art, and the social and political themes raised in the artworks support Barnett's suggestion that active learning may lead students into new or challenging territory (Barnett, 2007).

A critical in-class activity involved students working in small teams on problem-based exercises where they were asked to identify and consider the application of Indigenous principles and protocols to a set of potential real-world professional scenarios. Developed in liaison with the Professor at the Centre, the scenarios were crafted for the purpose of activating potentially problematic issues in relation to Indigenous content, digital media, and Indigenous principles and protocols. For example, one scenario exercise involved students being requested by a non-Indigenous client to misappropriate Indigenous cultural imagery as part of a digital redesign and social media branding strategy for a tourist destination, and for students to consider the protocol-related issues raised and how they might respond to this. Another involved designing a diabetes health-care website and app for use in communities with varying English language competencies, and how this might be approached. The Professor provided guidance on how these scenarios might be effectively negotiated in the real world, such as through local community consultation and potential engagement of an Indigenous artist for the tourist scenario, and via extensive liaison and consultation with national Aboriginal health organisation NACCHO for the second.

The scenario exercises operated in a twofold way – firstly students were asked to identify the relevant Indigenous principles and protocols being activated by the scenario, followed by students discussing potential strategies and approaches for addressing the problem. It was emphasised that students should not race towards easy solutions or quick fixes, but rather to tease out the issues raised by the scenarios in terms of the cultural principles and protocols involved. Students engaged very solidly with these scenario exercises, and the resulting class discussions demonstrated that students were beginning to understand how Indigenous principles and protocols could operate as a foundation for working with Indigenous content and communities, and how these should inform their professional practice.

As an immediate follow-up activity, students were asked to explore and discuss two real-world mobile apps that intersected with Indigenous culture in ways that might now be understood as problematic (e.g., around drug and alcohol addiction). The apps had been identified through our initial research into Indigenous apps. Without wishing to draw attention to the apps or organisations responsible, one was a health app that highlighted disease statistics and geographic locations in ways that appeared to stigmatise and negatively stereotype specific communities. Students quickly identified issues regarding the principles of Respect; Communication, Consultation, Negotiation and Consent as areas of concern regarding this app, with several students mentioning negative stereotyping and dehumanising language as major issues. This particular app, developed with state government funding and initially released in 2015, has been

removed from the AppStore as of 2019. Another worked with Indigenous design elements in ways that students now considered problematic in terms of a lack of copyright attribution of artists. Drawing attention to these two real-world projects through the class activity facilitated a further embedding of the Indigenous principles and protocols in the context of professional digital media practice and highlighted their relevance to media and communication students.

These integrated learning materials and activities operated as important scaffolding for student preparation towards the assessment item. In particular, through the process of applying the Indigenous principles and protocols to real-world scenarios within class we came to appreciate their effectiveness in terms of embedding Indigenous professional competencies. As a result, we recommended that students use the principles and protocols as a guiding framework for approaching the assessment item and for engaging with and discussing the content within their mobile app case study. This experience also suggests that Indigenous principles and protocols have strong applicability within the media and communication discipline more broadly and could be considered foundational across various program areas including journalism, arts, film and media production.

Assessment of Students' Development of Indigenous Professional Capability

Outcomes

The students presented their case studies as individual presentations in week 5 and 6 of semester after undertaking the preparatory in-class activities in weeks 3 and 4. We invited the Professor to observe a number of the student presentations and provide informal review of the students learning and engagement with the item. Overall, we discovered that students engaged with the learning task at a deep level, presenting thoughtful discussions of their selected mobile app and demonstrating a nuanced understanding of Indigenous principles and protocols as they applied to the selected case studies. Students contributed complex reflections on the potentials towards cultural preservation, knowledge sharing and community building represented by Indigenous mobile apps and content, whilst also highlighting areas of potential friction as Indigenous cultures intersect with emergent digital platforms and content.

In terms of the CILO concerning Indigenous cultural competency, specifically the capacity to “Integrate knowledge of Indigenous issues in professional practices and engage responsibly in communicating with and about Indigenous people and communities”, we believe that the task and its associated scaffolding framework facilitated this extremely well. Out of a cohort of 140 students in 2018 when the item was introduced, only two students failed the item. Student feedback was obtained using the Subject Feedback Survey mechanism, with students asked a specific question about student perception of their development of Indigenous cultural competencies within the subject. For the SFS question “I am developing Indigenous cultural competencies to work respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations”, students self-reported at the high end of the scale with an overall score of 4.51 out of 5

from ninety-three respondents (SFS, 2018). The SFS also allows for longer qualitative answers from students, and some of these referred to the app case study. De-identified individual comments from 2018 included:

The assessment on Aboriginal apps etc was great, and I feel that it added to deepening my understanding about Indigenous people and culture.

The assignment regarding Indigenous apps was well thought out and much needed within a Communications degree. I study Aboriginal Political History as well as part of my course, though the majority of Communications students are not exposed to such important information throughout their degree.

I enjoyed the learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations however I do think an Indigenous person needs to be invited in to talk and teach the class.

I loved the content in this unit and appreciated its focus on the importance of working respectfully and tactfully with Indigenous bodies.

While the overall student results and feedback were positive in 2018, there were also challenges we sought to address for later iterations. These included staff concern regarding non-Indigenous academics having appropriate understanding of Indigenous cultural competencies and protocols, concerns about a lack of Indigenous expert voices in relation to digital media and longer-term sustainability of the range of scaffolded activities. We had been fortunate to receive the guidance of The Centre's Professor in relation to the 2018 assessment introduction, the task scaffolding, in-class scenarios and observations of student presentations. Similarly, the other University Centres had provided cultural support through facilitation of student exposure to Indigenous cultural materials via the-guided artwork tours. While this internal support helped to prepare teaching staff regarding the learning materials and activities for the 2018 delivery, the longer-term sustainability of this range of activities and involvement was less certain given its reliance on staff availability outside our own program.

Response, Review and Refinement

Given our concerns about the long term sustainability of activities involving staff and resources outside our Faculty, the absence of a lecture program and the lack of access to Indigenous experts discussing digital media, we sought to revise the learning materials with an emphasis on amplifying Indigenous voices in relation to digital media production and practice. This led us to apply in mid 2018 for an internal Teaching and Learning grant to develop targeted video resources for inclusion within the subject learning materials.

In December 2018 following contact with the Indigenous Digital Excellence (IDX) Hub located within the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence (NCIE) in Redfern, we interviewed pioneering Indigenous developers John Saulo and Liam Ridgeway, the founders of Ngakkan Nyaagu (NGNY) digital media agency. Around

thirty minutes of video content was produced, comprising nine short videos of around three minutes each, in which John and Liam discussed specific aspects of their work such as how Indigenous protocols are integrated into their professional practice, their recent digital projects and the emerging Indigenous digital economy in Australia.

The NGNY videos were integrated into the 2019 delivery of the subject as a critical expansion of the scaffolded learning materials. Played in classes over several weeks to emphasise key concepts and underscore the ways in which protocols apply to Indigenous content development, they covered issues such as respect for community elders and their cultural knowledge, the need for extended community consultation and consent regarding knowledge sharing with a wider audience, and a related need for ongoing discussion and consent regarding the use of specific imagery, design elements, language or visual content produced for wider public consumption. As such, the videos solidly reinforced Indigenous cultural competencies through demonstrating their applicability to real-world digital media practice. Most importantly, the video content allowed students to hear from Indigenous digital creators who are experts in the field, with direct relevance to building students' Indigenous competencies in relation to their future professional practice. The video interviews with John and Liam of NGNY also provided additional benefits in terms of positive role-modelling for Indigenous students undertaking the subject and recognition of the increasing engagement and opportunities for Indigenous practitioners and entrepreneurs within the digital landscape. In 2019 we omitted the artwork tour activity in favour of the targeted video interviews, in part due to staff availability issues but also in recognition of the heightened disciplinary relevance (UA, 2011; Carey, 2015, Page, Trudgett & Bodkin-Andrews, 2019) of the interviews.

The 2019 SFS results continued to demonstrate positive outcomes, with individual comments supporting the relevance of Indigenous principles and protocols directly within digital media as well as to the Communication discipline more broadly:

Learning about the Indigenous apps and protocols for integrating Indigenous culture in digital experiences was very rewarding - I learnt a lot - and also seeing International students present on this assessment in particular was great as I don't think this is focused on enough in other subjects.

The first assignment concerning the Indigenous Principles and Protocols document was extremely useful, for this subject and for all my other subjects. The information learned is extremely valuable and has taught me how to be more mindful towards Aboriginal Australians.

Material on working with/for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was very appropriate and useful.

Conclusion

Australian universities have a requirement to embed Indigenous cultural competencies as learning outcomes within their programs, and as educators we continue to explore how this can best be achieved in ways that are culturally appropriate, respectful, non-tokenistic and professionally relevant. We have discussed an approach for embedding

Indigenous competencies in the media and communication discipline, sharing the approach, assessment and scaffolded learning activities developed for a subject within a digital and social media program. This approach builds competencies in relation to digital media professional practice through facilitating students' understanding of Indigenous principles and protocols (Janke, Hromek), exploring how these operate within authentic real-world as well as plausible scenarios through the voices and guidance of Indigenous experts (NGNY, Professor) and examining a range of existing Indigenous mobile apps through this conceptual lens.

From this example we have demonstrated that foregrounding Indigenous principles and protocols within this integrated, scaffolded learning approach has been highly effective in building Indigenous competencies in digital and social media students within the media and communication discipline. Considering the heightened awareness of problematic media-related engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and content, it is critical that media and communication graduates understand Indigenous principles and protocols and demonstrate awareness and sensitivity in applying these to professional contexts. The success demonstrated in this subject has led to renewed engagement and implementation of Indigenous competencies in other production-oriented areas within our school, including Journalism, Media Practices and Industry, and further expansion into other Digital and Social Media subjects. As Page, Trudgett & Bodkin-Andrews point out:

If university graduates are indeed to contribute to better service provision and contribute to enhanced socioeconomic outcomes for Indigenous Australians, they are likely to benefit from learning activities that make explicit the link between Indigenous content, discipline, and work practice (Bolton and Andrews, 2018 and Prout et al., 2014, as cited in Page, Trudgett & Bodkin-Andrews, 2019, p. 10).

The approach discussed here equips media students with a culturally sensitive and professional foundation emphasising Indigenous cultural competencies, offers experience in applying Indigenous principles and protocols in industry contexts, and builds their capacity to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities within their future professional practice. In sharing this approach, we wish to again emphasise the importance of foregrounding Indigenous voices, perspectives and knowledges in learning materials, of consulting with Indigenous colleagues and experts for suggestions and feedback, and of ensuring students are supported in this learning through scaffolded, discipline-specific activities. Given the rapid, convergent and pervasive nature of digital communication, building the capacity of media and communication graduates to engage respectfully with Indigenous peoples, communities and cultural content is critically important.

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